

Canadian youth in a  
changing world

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CANADIAN YOUTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

Maureen Baker

Political and Social Affairs  
Division  
Research Branch  
Ottawa

August 1985



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INTRODUCTION

Opportunities available to young people are largely influenced by their own abilities, their knowledge of the world, and their parents' socio-economic situation. But opportunities are also affected by the state of the economy, cultural values and government policies. Youth growing up in the 1980s are facing a world much different from the one in which their parents and even their older siblings were raised. In the past ten years, changes in the economy, the job market, in technology and communications and in social values have significantly influenced young people's lives.

The United Nations and Statistics Canada arbitrarily define "youth" as those between 15 and 24 years. In Canada, youth is considered to be a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. During these years, young people must make decisions about the future - often with insufficient knowledge of their own abilities and of the world. The fact that youth is also a period of experimentation causes social ambivalence about teenagers. While young people are expected to make decisions about the future, they are sometimes denied the right to try out different lifestyles. Teenagers are often looked upon with scorn for being anti-establishment yet they are generally denied a place in the social order or any decision-making opportunities.

This paper will discuss demographic, behavioural and attitudinal trends among youth and their implications for social policy. Since young people form about one-fifth of our population, their attitudes and behaviour cannot be ignored. The paper will conclude with some projections of young people's behaviour as adults and their social, political and economic situation as they age.

## DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the proportion of the Canadian population aged 15 to 24 increased. This increase corresponded with the period of high birth rates from 1951 to 1966 known as the "post-war baby boom". In 1981, Canada's young people numbered 4.7 million or 19.3% of the population,<sup>(1)</sup> but it is estimated that this percentage will fall within ten years to its 1961 level of 14%.

While 95% of 15 to 19 year olds are single, 56% of 20 to 24 year olds are married. Women tend to marry earlier than men; 23 is the average age of marriage for women compared with 25 for men. Since the 1970s, the average age of marriage has been rising so that fewer teenagers are now married. But at the same time, increasing numbers of young people are living together without legal marriage. As with other age groups, the divorce rate among 20 to 24 year olds has increased considerably in the past ten years with divorce continuing to be most common in those teenage marriages in which the wife was pregnant before the wedding.

Like the rest of the population, most young people live in urban centres. Because a disproportionate number of 20 to 24 year olds migrate to large cities for education or employment, it may appear as though city living causes youth problems. On the other hand, out-migration of young people from rural areas sometimes results in a labour shortage and a disproportionate number of older people in rural areas in small

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(1) Linda Demers, Young People, A Statistical Overview, Ottawa, Secretary of State, 1982, p. 10.

communities. This may lead to a heavier demand for services for the elderly in small communities and more demand for youth-oriented services in large cities.

## EDUCATION

Since 1921, when school attendance until age 16 became compulsory, children and young people have been increasingly segregated from the adult world. This is especially true of adolescents from wealthier families, who could afford to stay in school longer and have therefore been protected from full-time paid employment and adult responsibilities until well into their twenties. Since most schools are age-graded and leisure activities are often school-related, age segregation extends from school activities to sports, games and clubs and to less organized leisure pursuits. Fifty years ago, neighbourhoods and small communities often held functions which involved all age groups. Although some small communities still do this, most Canadian young people associate mainly with others of their own age. Urbanization and regional schools have promoted age-segregation because more people of the same age group are brought together. This creates a youth culture with behavioural standards and attitudes distinct from those of the adult world. Parents, teachers, and policy-makers may find the language, dress, hair styles and morality of teenagers difficult to comprehend. But as they gain increasing confidence, education and maturity, many young people leave behind the fads and fashions of their teen years. Underneath the spiky hair and net tee-shirts of teenagers, researchers have found insecure young people with values similar to those of their parents.<sup>(1)</sup> In fact, very few young people engage in anti-social behaviour despite the publicity given to this minority.

Until the late 1970s, the proportion of young people attending school continued to rise. Table 1 shows the percentage of 15 to 19

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(1) M. Baker, "What Will Tomorrow Bring? ... A Study of the Aspirations of Adolescent Women, Ottawa, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1985.



Table 1: Percentage of the Population 15-19  
Attending School in Canada

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1951	40.8%	40.1%
1961	61.2	55.7
1971	73.8	71.1
1981	65.5	66.2

Source: Minister of State for Youth, Youth/Jeunesse, A Statistical  
Perspective on Youth in Canada, Ottawa, 1984, p. 90.

year olds in Canada who were attending school from 1951 to 1981. These figures vary considerably by province with the youth of the more urbanized provinces of Ontario and Quebec having higher rates of school attendance. In rural and remote areas, school attendance declines sharply after age 16.

Since the 1950s, the proportion of 18 to 24 year olds enrolled in post-secondary institutions has risen dramatically. In 1951, 6% of this age group was in college or university. By 1982-83, this figure had risen to 22%.<sup>(1)</sup> (See Table 2) Much of this change can be attributed to the dramatic increase in the enrolment of young women. In 1961, 38.5% of post-secondary students were female. By 1982, this figure had risen to 50.8%.<sup>(2)</sup> (See Table 3) In addition, the expansion of the college and university system during the late 1960s and the 1970s also broadened the socio-economic base of students and allowed more young people from poor and immigrant families to study.

In the past few years, education costs have escalated, university class sizes have increased and the quality of Canadian post-secondary education has been debated. While university faculty and administrators have generally argued that they are underfunded by federal and provincial governments, others have claimed that universities have been too lax in their entrance qualifications, should reduce their size and focus on the quality of education.<sup>(3)</sup> Recent changes in the entrance qualifications of some institutions and the raising of tuition fees will undoubtedly restrict enrolment in the future. The unfortunate consequence for potential students is the lack of alternatives, since youth unemployment rates are at an all-time high.

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(1) Statistics Canada, Education in Canada, Cat. 81-229, Ottawa, 1984, p. 65.

(2) Ibid, p. 58-64; Statistics Canada, Perspectives Canada III, Ottawa, 1980, p. 79.

(3) D. Bercuson, R. Bothwell and J. Granatstein, The Great Brain Robbery, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1984.

**Table 2: Full-Time Post-Secondary Enrolment as a Proportion of the Relevant Age Groups, by Level**

Year	Non-University (% of population aged 18-21 years)	University		Total Post-Secondary (% of population aged 18-24 years)
		Undergraduate (% of population aged 18-21 years)	Graduate (% of population aged 22-24 years)	
1951	3.2	7.0	0.6	6.0
1961	5.3	11.9	1.1	10.6
1971	11.2	18.5	3.2	18.5
1981-82*	14.4	18.6	3.4	20.5
1982-83*	15.4	19.7	3.6	21.7

Sources: Canada, Statistics Canada, **Perspectives Canada III**, H.J. Adler and D.A. Brusegard, eds. (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, April 1980), catalogue no. 11-511, table 4.9, p. 78.

\* Statistics Canada, **Education in Canada: A Statistical Review for 1982-83** (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, June 1984), catalogue no. 81-229, table 7, p. 65.



**Table 3: Female Enrolment as a Percentage of Total Post-Secondary Enrolment, by Level**

Year	Non-University	University			Total Post-Secondary
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Total	
1961	69.1	26.2	16.4	25.7	38.5
1966	55.3	33.7	18.0	32.4	38.3
1971	45.9	37.7	22.6	36.0	39.5
1976	49.8	43.7	30.6	42.3	45.1
1981*	51.9	48.9	39.0	44.0	48.3
1982**	52.9	51.7	38.6	50.1	50.8

Sources: Canada, Statistics Canada, **Perspectives Canada III**, H.J. Adler and D.A. Brusegard, eds. (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, April 1980), catalogue no. 11-511, table 4.11, p. 79.

\* Statistics Canada, **School Attendance and Level of Schooling** (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, January 1984), catalogue no. 92-914, tables 2-1, 2-2.

\*\* Statistics Canada, **Education in Canada: A Statistical Review for 1982-1983** (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, June 1984), catalogue no. 81-229, tables 2-6, pp. 58-64.

## EMPLOYMENT

Over the past 20 years, the educational and occupational aspirations of adolescents have risen as they realize they need more schooling to find a job. "Educational inflation" elevated the qualifications needed for many jobs during the past ten years. For example, students used to be able to attend college for one or two years after high school to qualify for teaching, but now need a university degree. Large corporations used to accept management trainees after high school but now hire university graduates.

As job opportunities have declined, young people must be more competitive and increase their educational levels. In a recent Canadian study of 15 to 19 year olds, nearly three-quarters of the adolescents interviewed planned to continue their education beyond high school.<sup>(1)</sup> Although many will be unable to do so for financial or intellectual reasons, the fact remains that the desire for formal schooling and the levels of school attendance are higher than ever before.

As more young people continue their education the participation rates of 15 to 19 year olds in the labour force rise. Tuition fees have increased and many families cannot afford to educate their children without some financial contribution by the student. Usually adolescents are able to find only low-paid service, clerical or manual labour jobs. Baker found that nearly half the students in her study worked part-time during evenings and weekends. Their jobs enabled them to afford an education yet cut into their time for homework and extra-curricular activities organized by the school. Ironically, students from higher socio-economic families were able to find part-time work more easily than those from lower socio-economic families. This was partly because of family contacts, opportunities to work in the family business or the tendency for adolescents from higher socio-economic families to present a more

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(1) Baker (1985).

favourable image to potential employers.<sup>(1)</sup> Table 4 shows how the participation rate of 15 to 24 year olds has changed since 1961. The downturn in 1983 indicates the difficulty many young people have recently experienced when looking for work.

Unemployment rates among young people have increased considerably since the 1960s. Because young people often have less job experience, fewer interpersonal and job-related skills and fewer employment contacts than older people, they experience above-average unemployment rates. Young women have traditionally experienced lower unemployment rates than young men because they have had the option of the domestic role and because of the ready availability of low-skilled clerical and service jobs. With technological innovations and economic cutbacks, however, many of these clerical and service positions are no longer available. At the same time, the age of marriage has risen and young women are less likely to be able to use marriage as an alternative to paid work. Most families now need two incomes. Consequently, female unemployment rates have also increased and have actually surpassed those of males.

Youth unemployment has also increased in other western industrialized countries. The influx of the "post-war baby boom" generation into the labour force occurred at the same time as low economic growth. Increased life expectancies and limited job mobility have led to few vacancies. At the same time more women have entered low level jobs which young men used to use as stepping stones to career positions. Consequently fewer jobs are now available for unskilled young people. (See Table 5) Table 6 also indicates that unemployment rates are highest for young people with the least education and that has become more true in recent years.

Concern about the consequences of prolonged youth unemployment has been expressed by Parliaments around the world. The adverse effects on physical and mental health, the potential for social unrest and the necessity for job creation and retraining, all cost taxpayers money. While short-term unemployment may be addressed with income maintenance schemes and employment information, long-term unemployment may require

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(1) These adolescents seemed to have a better understanding of employer expectations, often were more articulate and dressed in "better" clothes (Baker, 1985).



Table 4: Participation Rates in the Labour Force  
of 15 to 24 year olds, Canada

	15-19 year olds	20-24 year olds
1961	36.6*	68.9
1971	42.9	72.4
1976	49.8	76.2
1981	55.7	79.7
1983	51.5	79.1
1985 (June)	57.5	85.6

\* 14 to 19 year olds

Source: Extracted from Statistics Canada, Historical Labour Force Statistics, Cat. 71-201, Ottawa, 1973; Minister of State for Youth, p. 40; Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, Cat. 71-001, June 1985, Ottawa, July 1985, p. 26.

Table 5: Unemployment Rates for 15 to 19 Year Olds,  
Canada, 1961-1985

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1961	16.1	9.2
1971	16.1	13.5
1981	17.0	15.5
*1985(June)	18.0	18.2

Source: OECD, The Nature of Youth Unemployment, Paris 1984, p. 30;  
\*Statistics Canada, The Labour Force, Cat. 71-001, June 1985,  
Ottawa, July 1985, p. 26.

Table 6: Unemployment Rates of 15 to 24 Year Olds by  
Educational Attainment, 1975 and 1983

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1983</u>
0-8 Years	21.1	30.8
High School	12.9	21.4
Some Post-Secondary	9.3	16.4
Post-Secondary Certificate or diploma	6.6	14.0
University Degree	6.2	10.5
Total	12.0	19.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Annual Averages 1975-1983, Cat.  
71-529, Ottawa, 1984, Table 8, p. 90, 106.

retraining, subsidized training programs, financial support for entrepreneurial activities, part-time work with partial unemployment compensation or temporary jobs which involve training subsidies for employers. Governments and employers are also beginning to experiment with using funds to relocate unemployed workers, part-time work with prorated benefits, early retirement to create new jobs and work-sharing schemes.

Canadian youth tend to take for granted government protection against unemployment and lack of income. Having grown up with social security programs, they expect to be educated, retrained, or to have their incomes subsidized when the economy stagnates. Many social security programs are work-related, however, and bypass youth who have never worked full-time for an extended period. If young people do not live with their parents or are no longer in school, they may find themselves outside the "safety net" unless they resort to welfare. While older workers may be adequately protected from unemployment, younger workers with no job experience are not.

## **SMOKING, ALCOHOL USE AND ILLEGAL DRUGS**

The prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse among young people has caused considerable concern because it is seen as an indicator of moral decadence or at least youth alienation and disenchantment. Policy-makers have sometimes attacked the advertising industry for linking affluence, sexuality and sociability with smoking and drinking. Recent statistics indicate, however, that smoking, alcohol consumption and the use of some drugs (cannabis, speed, heroin) has declined in recent years. This may indicate that the publicity campaigns are working or that the causes of drug use have subsided.

Comparative statistics for cigarette smoking are readily available from Health and Welfare Canada and Statistics Canada. Since the 1960s, fewer males aged 15 to 24 smoke cigarettes. Teenage girls, however, increased their consumption in the early 70s and still smoked more cigarettes in 1981 than in 1966. Women aged 20 to 24 have decreased their



consumption marginally but this age group still contains more women smokers than men smokers. Smoking also varies by province, with more regular smokers among the young men and women in Quebec. Table 7 shows these figures in more detail for males and females.

Table 7: Percentage of Regular Cigarette Smokers by Sex and Age, Canada, 1966 to 1981

	15-19		20-24		25-44	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1966	35.1	20.0	60.1	43.4	61.8	31.4
1972	35.0	28.4	52.6	40.6	53.3	38.8
1975	29.5	27.4	48.3	38.3	48.3	37.0
1977	26.9	26.7	45.2	40.7	47.0	36.6
1979	26.8	26.0	42.3	39.8	44.0	36.0
1981	22.8	23.4	39.9	40.8	42.6	33.4

Source: Extracted from Statistics Canada, Canadian Youth, Cat. 82-545E, Ottawa, April 1985, Table 4 and 5, p. 24.

Figures on alcohol consumption show an increase until the end of the 70s and a slight decrease since 1980. About two-thirds of Canadian high school students drink alcohol, with males, older students, those from higher income groups and those who are not regular church-attenders drinking more heavily.

Table 8:  
Percentage of High School Students Drinking Alcohol\*  
in Toronto and Ontario

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
1968	51.7%	40.4%	46.3%
1970**	56.4	49.6	60.2
1972	73.0	68.1	70.6
1974	74.8	71.0	72.9
1977	78.5	74.3	76.3
1979	79.0	74.9	76.9
1981	74.7	76.1	75.3

\* At least once in last year

\*\* Includes grade 6 and wording was changed from 1968

Source: Reginald Smart, The New Drinkers, Teenage Use and Abuse of Alcohol, Addiction Research Foundation, 1980, p. 18; Addiction Research Foundation, Statistics on Alcohol and Drug Use in Canada and Other Countries, Toronto, 1982, p. 119. (Library of Parliament HV5028/S73)

Table 9:  
Proportion of Toronto and Ontario Students (Grades 7 to 13)  
Using Marijuana in Past Six or Twelve Months

Toronto (past 6 months)

1968	6.7%
1970	18.3
1972	20.9
1974	22.9

Ontario (past 12 months)

1977	25.1%
1979	31.7
1981	29.9

Source: Reginald G. Smart, Forbidden Highs, Addiction Research Foundation, 1983, p. 32. (Library of Parliament, Br. V. HV5840/C2/S53F)

Table 10:  
Prevalence of Drug Use\* Among Students (Grade 7-13) in Ontario

	<u>Cannabis</u>	<u>Speed</u>	<u>Heroin</u>	<u>LSD</u>
1976	22.0**	-	-	-
1977	25.1	2.7	2.0	6.1
1979	31.7	3.6	2.3	8.6
1981	29.9	3.0	1.5	10.2

\* Used at least once in past 12 months

\*\* Figure for all of Canada

Source: Statistics Canada, Perspectives Canada III, Ottawa, 1980, p. 58 (for 1976 figure); Addiction Research Foundation, 1982, p. 67.

In Ontario the use of marijuana rose from the 1960s to the 1970s but appears to have dropped off slightly over the past few years. About 30% of Ontario students (grade 7 to 13) have used this drug in the past year. While the proportion of Ontario students using harder drugs such as heroin has never been very high, the proportion has dropped from 1979 to 1981. The use of LSD, however, seems to be on the increase.

Although many people are concerned about drug abuse and alcohol consumption among young people, adults are not always good models. Many middle-aged parents are heavy coffee drinkers, smoke numerous cigarettes, consume immoderate quantities of alcohol and are heavy users of tranquilizers. With adult examples such as these, it is not surprising that some young people become involved in drugs. For other youth, drugs are a form of escapism or transcendence of a routine or distressing life.

## SUICIDE RATES

Considerable attention has been paid to youth suicide, although the rates are generally higher for older people with age 50 as a high point for suicide for both sexes. From the 1960s to the 1980s, however, the suicide rates for young men have increased dramatically and for young women moderately.



Table 11: Suicide Rates for the Population Aged 15 to 24 by Sex,  
Canada, 1961 to 1981 (per 100,000 population)

	15-19 years			20-24 years		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1961	3.7	0.8	2.3	9.0	2.5	5.7
1971	12.7	3.1	7.9	23.1	5.7	14.4
1981	21.2	3.8	12.7	33.2	5.9	19.6

Source: Statistics Canada (L. Lapierre and H. Aylwin) Canadian Youth Perspectives on their Health, Cat. 82-54 5E, Ottawa, April 1985, p. 87.

Rising rates of suicide and attempted suicide give us only a partial indication of self-destructive behaviour. Death certificates for suspected suicides are sometimes altered to protect the family. Not all suicide attempts are admitted to a hospital. Many motor vehicle accidents may be suicide but not recorded as such. Official rates are certainly a low estimate of self-destructive behaviour yet they indicate a serious problem with young people.

Suicide has been related to lack of social integration, feelings of "alienation" in the population, transience, and rapid changes in values, income and lifestyle. Native people, those living in less developed frontier areas of Canada and prisoners all have above-average suicide rates. Poor job prospects, families in a state of flux, changing social and moral values could all contribute to high youth suicide rates.

The figures show that men are far more likely than women to kill themselves. If we look at attempted suicide, however, we see a different story. The Canadian government keeps statistics on those admitted to hospitals for attempted suicide or self-inflicted injuries. These figures are particularly high for 20 to 24 year old females compared with

Table 12: Hospital Separations Related to Attempted Suicide or  
"Self-inflicted injuries" by Age and Sex, 1980-81  
(Rate per 100,000 population)

	15-19 years			20-24 years		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Nova Scotia	22.4	35.2	28.6	27.8	38.7	33.1
Manitoba	148.9	243.3	195.5	154.7	167.4	161.0
Sask.	53.1	90.5	71.5	80.2	86.4	83.2
Alberta	98.5	211.7	154.1	125.0	191.8	157.1
B.C.	161.5	303.7	231.2	212.7	272.2	231.5

Source: Statistics Canada (L. Lapierre and H. Aylwin) Canada Youth, Perspectives on Their Health, Cat. 82-545E, Ottawa, April 1985, p. 86.

all other age and sex groups. (See Table 12) This is often a stressful time for young women, with possible concerns about education, employment, marriage or pregnancy. Some researchers have attributed women's much lower suicide rate to their closer relationships with their families which may give their lives more meaning. Yet higher attempted suicide for women is usually explained as a "cry for help" rather than a serious death wish. Perhaps some sexism is involved in this interpretation and the difference in female and male behaviour may be simply related to the different methods the sexes choose to end their lives. Men are more likely to use guns or other weapons, while women use drug overdoses probably because of sex differences in accessibility to and familiarity with these objects. It is, however, harder to "fail" with a gun.

Rising rates of youth suicide have led to increased funding of crisis "hot lines", suicide research and counselling for potential suicide victims. More attention is being paid to psychological problems in children and youth and to family group counselling by social service professionals.

### ACCIDENT RATES AND DEATH RATES

As with suicide, young women are far less likely to be killed in motor vehicle accidents than are young men. For one thing, fewer women are licensed to drive and regularly operate a motor vehicle. As well, driving fast and recklessly, driving motor cycles, and drinking and driving are more often associated with young men. (See Table 13)

Table 13: Death Rate Per 100,000 Population of Young People  
from Motor Vehicle Traffic Accidents, 1961-1981

	Male	Female	Total
<hr/>			
15-19 years			
1961	37.9	13.8	26.0
1971	62.2	24.2	43.5
1981	64.1	19.4	42.2
20-24 years			
1961	68.6	11.7	40.0
1971	84.6	20.9	52.7
1981	68.4	16.6	42.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Youth, 1985, p. 82.



Comparative death rates show that young men, socially rewarded for "macho" behaviour by their parents and their peers, live much more dangerous lives than young women. They are more likely to drink, smoke and use drugs in excess and engage in high risk manual labour jobs and leisure activities such as sky diving, car racing, or stuntsmanship. The socialization of North American and European boys often leads to a self-destructive lifestyle but there have been few outcries against it by men themselves because this role is also seen as leading to lucrative and powerful positions in society. Although there have been some tendencies toward moderation in smoking, drug use, nutrition and motor vehicle deaths, the fast-paced and risky life is still portrayed in advertising as "manly" and desirable. It is for this reason that some lobby groups have tried to disassociate fun and sexiness from smoking, drinking and driving in advertising. The leading cause of death for young men and women in 1981 remains motor vehicle accidents. Suicide ranks second.

#### SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND PREGNANCY

Until 1969, it was against the law to advertise or disseminate information on or devices for contraception. Since then a trend toward lower birth rates has been apparent among women of all ages.

Although young people engage in sexual activity at earlier ages now than in the 1950s, the fertility or birth rates of teenage women

Table 14: Fertility Rate per 1,000 Women by Age Group in Canada, 1966 to 1981

	1966	1971	1976	1981
15-19 years	48.2	40.1	33.4	26.4
20-24	169.1	134.4	110.3	96.7
25-29	163.5	142.0	129.9	126.9
30-34	103.3	77.3	65.6	68.0
35-39	57.5	33.6	21.1	19.4
40-44	19.1	9.4	4.3	3.2

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Youth, 1985, p. 34.

have declined considerably since that time. Table 14 shows fewer teenagers are producing children and proportionally more women from age 25 to 29 are giving birth.

Part of this trend towards fewer teenage births can be attributed to more widespread use of contraception and some increase in the therapeutic abortion rate. For 15 to 17 year olds, the abortion rate per 1000 females increased from 10.9 in 1975 to 11.7 in 1982. For 18 to 19 year olds, the rate increased from 16.7 to 21.1.(1)

Perhaps the most important development for those working with teenagers is the trend for teenage mothers to keep their babies rather than allow them to be adopted. Unwed mothers can now receive government and community support, attitudes towards sexuality and marriage are more relaxed and more opportunities now exist for single mothers to work and support their children. While only 30% of all unwed mothers in Ontario kept their babies in 1968, in 1977 88% did so.(2) This is a sizable increase and has been viewed with alarm by some social workers. Many teenage mothers have dropped out of school and have no job skills with which to support themselves. These mothers are most likely to depend on social assistance to survive and may be unable to give their children the economic and social resources they need to develop and compete in our society. At a time when social service workers are trying to keep families together and keep children out of foster homes, the encouragement given to teen mothers to raise their own children is disturbing to some. Recent studies indicate that many teen mothers who initially keep their babies find that they cannot cope two years later.(3)

In recent years, international scares about the rise in sexually-transmitted diseases (especially AIDS) may have curbed the sexual

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(1) Statistics Canada, Therapeutic Abortions 1982, Cat. 82-211, Ottawa, p. 47.

(2) M. Eichler, Families in Canada Today, Gage, Toronto, 1983, p. 281.

(3) D.W. Wood and S. Nuttall, "Single Adolescent Mothers: Dimensions of Unscheduled Parenting in Ontario", Paper presented to Annual Meetings of Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, Guelph, 1984.

behaviour of young people, but trends will not be readily apparent for several years.

Attitudes towards sexual behaviour are definitely changing. While in 1970 just over 50% approved of premarital sex,<sup>(1)</sup> a recent national survey of teenagers found that 80% favoured sex before marriage if the couple loved each other and 93% felt that birth control ought to be available to teenagers.<sup>(2)</sup> A variety of North American studies indicate that about 50% of 15 to 19 year olds and as many as 67% of 19 year olds<sup>(3)</sup> have premarital intercourse. Although 50% of teenagers are engaging in premarital sex, only about half of these are using contraception,<sup>(4)</sup> a fact which is causing great concern among parents and youth workers.

## CRIMINALITY

Since 1962, the number of crimes against the person allegedly committed by young persons (juveniles) has increased eight times, and crimes against property six times. This increase in crime exceeds the growth of the juvenile population severalfold.<sup>(5)</sup> Although juvenile crime has increased more rapidly than adult crime, crime rates for adults remain higher, especially with respect to the more violent crimes. Almost 66% of the juvenile offences in 1981 were against property (e.g. theft, breaking and entering) and only 4% were violent crimes against the person.

Part of the reported increase in crimes committed by young people can be attributed to more effective police surveillance and a greater determination to bring young people to justice. This may be particularly true for females, whose juvenile crime rates have dramatically increased

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(1) Charles Hobart, "Changing Orientations to Courtship: A Study of Young Canadians", in W.E. Mann (ed.), Canada: A Sociological Profile, Vol. 2, 1970.

(2) Reginald Bibby and Donald Posterski, The Emerging Generation, Irwin, Toronto, 1985, p. 82.

(3) Ibid, p. 77.

(4) Ibid, p. 79.

(5) Minister of State for Youth, p. 119.



since 1962. But females have traditionally had much lower crime rates than males.

Several different theories about women's crime rates exist. One suggests that women now have greater opportunities to commit crime since they are participating more in public life, dealing with money, property and other people. Another theory suggests that women's changing role and greater assertiveness will encourage them to adopt similar behaviour to males. A third theory suggests that society and especially the police are now less tolerant of breaches of the law by young women and are less likely to treat them in an informal and paternalistic way. Consequently more young women are arrested and convicted.

Treatment of young offenders by the police and courts is relatively lenient.<sup>(1)</sup> Many are released with only a police warning, while others have their cases dismissed once they are brought before the courts. Incarceration, especially in a federal institution (where a minimum sentence is two years) has been quite rare.

The new Young Offenders Act has introduced significant changes to the administration of justice. A uniform maximum age is now applied in all provinces. All young persons will be subject to the same criminal charges as adults, instead of having special categories of offences such as truancy. Young persons will be considered more responsible and accountable for their own actions but will have access to services and facilities to ensure that incarceration and the more severe penalties of the law are used only as a last resort.

Rising rates of crime for both juveniles and adults may be more apparent than real. Victims are now more likely to report theft because they can make an insurance claim. Mechanical surveillance techniques and computerized RCMP records assist security personnel and police to catch more offenders. Professionalization of the police and urban anonymity discourage an informal treatment of juvenile offenders, such as actual or threatened talking to their families. Changes in society such as the growing trend towards consumerism, do, however, tend to encourage higher crime rates.

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(1) Minister of State for Youth, p. 119.

Urbanization brings more people into close proximity, and juxtaposes the rich and the poor. Commercial display windows tantalize those without money and advertisements portray the joys of affluence. Working in large multi-national corporations and shopping in huge retail stores facilitate theft because of the larger social distance between the worker or client and the owner. The anonymity of the city makes theft easier because the offender can merge with the crowd. All these factors - real and apparent - raise our official rates of crime.

## PROJECTIONS FOR YOUTH

Trends in personal habits such as the decline in smoking, drinking, use of drugs, and increased interest in exercise and nutrition all indicate that Canadians in general have become more concerned with health and fitness. Policy makers and health practitioners will probably focus more on preventative health and safety standards. Stricter drinking and driving law enforcement could be used to reduce motor vehicle accident rates as could reduction of the power of cars and motor cycles. Anti-smoking campaigns may focus on the negative health consequences, but governments could also drop subsidies on tobacco farmers, ban cigarette advertising and create no-smoking zones in all enclosed public places.

In their personal lives, today's youth is more likely to see living together as a preliminary stage (or an alternative) to marriage. Marriage will be viewed as less permanent and the legal act of divorce will seem more acceptable. Although marriage dissolution will undoubtedly still involve emotional trauma, legally and socially it will not be so onerous. Many young people today have lived through their parents' marriage break-up and have learned coping mechanisms. These young people from divorced families are more likely to see divorce as a solution to their own hypothetical marital problems and are likely to be able to visualize life outside marriage.<sup>(1)</sup> However, most young people do not anticipate the marital and child-rearing problems they are likely to experience. High levels of female education and urbanization are associated with smaller

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(1) Maureen Baker, What Will Tomorrow Bring?, 1985.

families all over the world and there are no indications that the present low birth rate will rise, barring a world war or other world crisis.

Young people who are now 15 to 24 years old were born at the end of a period of high birth rates and might expect to be a part of an age cohort which will continue to experience some problems because of its sheer size. As many young people compete for jobs now, an equally large number may compete for promotions in ten years. This suggests that aspirations for professional career mobility may be unreasonable and several career changes should be anticipated. For those who expect jobs but no "careers" (in the sense of progression through the ranks in one occupation), frequent unemployment or underemployment may become a more common pattern for this generation than for the last. Because of the lack of opportunities for full-time permanent work, term contracts and part-time work may be realistic alternatives. Self-employment may also become more widespread. Although this age cohort is better-educated than their elders, early experiences with unemployment and underemployment may disadvantage them on the job market. If the economy does not substantially expand, there may be fewer permanent life-time jobs in the near future. It should be recognized, however, that only a small segment of society (better-educated white males) enjoyed the kind of job security and career mobility often associated with the last generation. Working class males and females seldom experienced much career mobility or job stability in the past.

The most discussed problem of youth today is unemployment. Youth unemployment may be successfully solved only by making changes to the structures of work. Shorter working hours, job-sharing, part-time work with prorated benefits, early retirement and bans on overtime may be more successful long-term solutions than income-replacement schemes. Temporary job creation projects or expectations of entrepreneurial activities among young people are unrealistic solutions for this age group. Starting a business or consulting service requires capital, experience and maturity which many young people do not have. A short-term job may provide some job experience but often not enough to justify the cost of the program and the raised expectations among young people. On the other hand, long-term unemployment is politically and socially risky because of its costs and

potential for social unrest. With increased education, young people expect to find meaningful employment. But definitions of "meaningful" may have to change for the present generation of Canadian youth, to accommodate international economic trends.

Governments can help young people to adapt to the changing economy by financially assisting them to stay in school, providing realistic career counselling for both sexes, helping them to find full-time permanent work, to retrain or relocate and by providing social security programs which are not work-related. Since young people are our most important resource, we need to address their concerns and problems constructively.



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